November 13, 1996

The Electronic Arts Program

A proposal to develop a new educational experience within the Cinema Department.

History

The Cinema Department has been involved with promoting, supporting and teaching the use of technology for the purpose of making visual and aural art. Over the years we have offered courses, developed alliances both on and off campus and made personal work using technology as a springboard for artistic invention. We are now interested in developing a formal structure within the Department to promote and teach an approach to the arts that uses currently available technology in inventive and non-traditional ways.

Assumptions

1. There is a need for the traditional arts to find ways to use technology for the production of visual and aural art that focuses on the technology.

2. Arts students are dependent on engineering expertise in order to explore the potential of technology a as means for invention within the arts. Conversely engineering students need to realize possibilities for humanizing the design and uses of technology.

3. The development of EAP will in no way attempt to replace or put in jeopardy any of the current programs or courses in any department. The EAP is offered as an additional experience for Arts and Engineering students.

4. Initially, EAP will be dependant on existing faculty, staff and administration currently employed by the University. Individual departments will decide their levels of involvement. Community members, alumni, and others will be sought for their expertise on a volunteer basis. The program will attempt to raise money as needed from sources outside of current department allocations. An example of this might be to develop a series of artists presentation/workshops to support and stimulate student projects.

5.   While a main focus of EAP is the use of electronics in art making, we will embrace all non-traditional art making approaches including those of performance art, language arts and others. The program intends to be inclusive while being rigorous and not interfering with traditional approaches.

Description

The Electronic Arts Program will focus on developing new uses of electronic based machines for the purpose of making visual and aural art. Disciplines involved would include but not be exclusive to Cinema, Music, Studio Art, Theater and the Watson School. Specific areas of study would include but not be exclusive to Video, MIDI, Computer, Film, Photography, Sound, Engineering, Electronic and Software Design.

While independent (individual) experiences are particularly important for production in the fine arts, students could work within small groups composed of individuals from diverse disciplines on group or individual projects. The assumption is that the individuals within the group will influence each other. Experts, university and community members, would address the groups as needed. Work space would be found for projects. Meeting times and methods of meeting would be flexible and based on need.

Students would have to obtain sponsorship from a faculty or expert member in order to be involved in the program.

A tool experience (course, workshop series?) would be required as the initial involvement in the program. Simple definitions of electronics, sound, video, MIDI, computer architecture, software construction (Basic?), simple physics, wave forms, pulleys, gears etc. All of this systems study is aimed toward working knowledge not theoretical understanding. Everyone teaches. (Could be a requirement for all art/theater/music/cinema majors?)

Projects could be accepted as a part of the student's major or count toward electives in the major. A major track eventually should be developed from within EAP (Cinema). The projects should carry upper level status and the work expected should reflect that position. Graduate credit would also be appropriate. Prerequisites using existing courses will be needed.

Projects would be required to invent structure. Projects would not reflect skill of operating existing machines or software but would invent new machine relationships and software. In other words learning to use software like Photoshop is not a goal. Developing filters based on convolving is. Learning to play a piano is not a goal. Manipulating wave forms for their sound or visual potential is. Using a MIDI keyboard to control instrument sounds with musical notation structure is not a goal. Using a MIDI keyboard as a voltage control device is. Making a WWW page is not a goal. Using the WWW as a performance platform is. The intention is to play outside of the existing notation systems and traditions of what we generally think of as Music, Theater, Visual Art, Movies, Television, and Literature. The intention is not to ignore the conventions of traditional art making but to find other connections based on electronic generation and invention. This is a push to make the machines go beyond the emulation of existing ideas, to use the machines as new stuff to make art with rather than having them try to act like existing structure.

Implementation

Spring 1997 semester will be spent determining the feasibility of this proposal. Defining a consensus of need and participation, putting together the basic structure, defining and solving problems that will arise will be the first steps toward implementation. By the end of the semester, we should have a firm understanding of the possibility of implementing the program.